

CSC: CoR: Chapter 9: Assembling Reasons and Evidence

The 10 salient sentence strings presented below are lifted from the chapter as is, without modification (except, perhaps, for a bit of punctuation here or there). They are presented in order of appearance in the chapter.

Ten Salient Sentence Strings

1. If they think those reasons make sense, they will look at the evidence you present, the bedrock of every argument. If they don't believe the evidence, they'll reject the reasons and, with them, your claim.
2. To start a storyboard, write your main claim and each reason (and subreasons) at the top of separate index cards or pages. Then bellow each reason (or subreason), list the evidence that supports it. If you don't have the evidence yet, note the *kind* of evidence that you'll need. Finally, arrange the pages or index cards on a table or wall to make their logical relationships visible at a glance.
3. But if they do question it, what you think is hard factual evidence is for them only a reason, and you have not yet reached that bedrock of evidence on which your argument must rest.
4. Even if you think you have good evidence, be clear how it was collected and by whom. If it was collected by others, find and cite a source as close to evidence as you can get.
5. Researchers rarely include in any report *the evidence itself*. Even if you collect your own data, counting rabbits in a field or interviewing the unemployed, your paper can only *refer to* or *represent* those rabbits and unemployed in words, numbers, tables, graphs, pictures, and so on.
6. Data you take from a source have invariably been shaped by that source, not to misrepresent them, but to put them in a form that serves the source's ends.
7. Unless you can talk to those who counted, organized, and reported the original data, you'll be at three or four removes from the evidence itself before you use it for your own purposes.
8. When you in turn report those data as your own evidence, you cannot avoid manipulating them once again, at least by putting it in a new context.
9. The last link in the chain of credibility is you, so be thoughtful about whose data you use and how you use them.
10. The most painful way to gain that experience is to be object of their criticism. Less painful is to seek examples of arguments that failed because their evidence was judged unreliable. Listen to lectures and class discussions for the kinds of arguments that your instructors criticize because they think the evidence is weak.